



The City of Worcester

Executive Office of Economic Development

Planning & Regulatory Services

Conservation Commission

c/o Planning & Regulatory Services Division
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Waterfront Permitting Guide

Massachusetts Wetlands Protection Act | City of Worcester Wetlands Protection Ordinance

Are you planning a project near the water?

Before starting work on your property near a lake, pond, stream, floodplain, or wetland, contact us at planning@worcesterma.gov or 508-799-1400 ext. 31440 to determine if a permit is required! Getting in touch early helps avoid delays or enforcement issues.

What requires a permit?

Conservation Commission approval is required for most activities involving construction, ground disturbance, vegetation removal, or hardscaping within 100 feet (aka the buffer zone) of a lake, pond, stream, or wetland and/or within the floodplain.

Examples of projects that may require a permit include:

- Installing new docks
- Repairing existing dock footings
- Constructing or repairing retaining walls
- Building decks, sheds, fences, driveways, walkways, patios, or other hardscaping
- Removing trees or other vegetation
- Grading, filling, or altering land

Activities that generally do *not* require a permit include:

- Mowing or maintaining existing lawn
- Tree pruning within landscaped areas
- Planting in lawns and landscaped areas
- Seasonal placement or removal of permitted/existing docks

Types of Permit Applications

There are two permitting pathways for projects within the Conservation Commission's jurisdiction:

Request for Determination of Applicability (RDA):

- For small projects with limited impact located farther from the water/wetland
- Shorter, simpler filing process
- Homeowners can usually prepare the application themselves
- Typical timeline: 3-5 weeks from submission of complete application

Notice of Intent (NOI):

- For larger projects or projects located in or close to wetland resource areas (e.g. waterbodies, vegetated wetlands, floodplains, banks)
- Requires detailed filings, often with engineered plans and an application prepared by a consultant
- Typical timeline: 1-3 months from submission of complete application

*Note: The Commonwealth of Massachusetts also requires a **Chapter 91 license** for docks installed on Great Ponds (such as Indian Lake & Lake Quinsigamond). This program is administered by **MassDEP**. For more information, visit <https://www.mass.gov/waterways-program-chapter-91> or contact DEP.Waterways@mass.gov. Docks on Lake Quinsigamond also require a permit from the Lake Quinsigamond Commission: <https://shrewsburyma.gov/259/Lake-Quinsigamond-Commission>*